Standard of medical education

*275. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the committee of academicians and scientists set up after the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, co-chaired by the Finance and Health Ministers, suggested that standards of higher medical education needed to be raised and monitored and recommended a Postgraduate Medical Education Board for higher education in medicine;

(b) if so, what are the other main recommendations made; and

(c) how many of them have been accepted by Government?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS): (a) to (c) In order to examine and make recommendations on the need for constitution of an independent authority to organize and regulate Post Graduate Medical Education in the country; to maintain the standard of Post Graduate Medical Diplomas and Degrees awarded by different universities in the country including Diplomate Degrees awarded by the National Board of Examinations and to assess the feasibility and also recommend the modalities for establishment of such body; the Government constituted a Committee under the chairmanship of Professor Ranjit Roy Choudhury. The Committee has submitted its report. In this report, the Committee has *inter-alia* recommended for creation of Post Graduate Medical Education Board of India to regulate and maintain the stahdard of the Post Graduate Medical Education in the country. The recommendations are under examination.

Late running of trains

*276. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI MAHMOOD A. MADANI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Railways have any norms/guidelines regarding the late running of passsenger trains;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether his Ministry conduct recurrent surveys on the late running of passenger trains;

(d) if so, what is the methodology adopted in conducting such surveys and the reason for such recurrent delays;

(e) whether Government identified the railway divisions where the maximum delays have taken place alongwith the details thereof;

(f) what steps are being taken to minimize the delays;

(g) whether Government propose to fix accountability in this respect;

(h) if so, the details thereof; and

(i) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) to (b) Yes, Sir. The late running of trains is calculated on originating to destination basis on the normal route. In case a train is late by more than 3 hours and a passenger does not wish to travel, full fare can be refunded at the journey commencing station within the prescribed time limits, which is as under:–

Distance of your journey	Time limit for cancellation (After the scheduled departure of the train)
Up to 200 kms.	3 hrs.
201 to 500 kms.	6 hrs.
Over 500 kms.	12 hrs.

If a passenger is not able to continue onward journey due to late running of connecting train, then also the refund for the balance journey can be taken within three hours of actual arrival of the train which has been delayed. Information about late running of trains is conveyed to the stations for announcement in the public announcement system. Information is also relayed through electronic media including internet regarding late running of trains for the convenience of the travelling public.

(c) to (e) The reasons for late running of trains include not only those which are attributable to the Railways such as asset failures, but also those which are beyond the control of Railways such as miscreant activities alarm chain pulling, natural calamities like cyclonic storms, damage to track due to breaches, law and order problems, bad weather, cattle run over and electricity grid failures. However, surveys and analysis as such on late running of trains are undertaken by Zonal Railways with a view not only to identify the reason for which maximum delays have occurred but also for taking corrective action.

(f) Following steps are being taken by Indian Railways to improve operations and the punctuality of passenger carrying trains:

1. Intensive, round the clock monitoring of trains at all three levels viz. Divisional, Zonal Head Quarters and Railway Board.
2. Launching of punctuality drives from time to time.
3. Running of trains at maximum permissible speed subject to observance of safety limits and speed restrictions.
4. Improvements in Time tabling to provide a clear path.
5. Improvement in standard of maintenance of assets to reduce equipment failures.
6. Counseling and motivating staff to ensure punctual running.
7. Liaison with State Government to tackle the Law and Order problems and miscreant activities.
8. Up-gradation of technology of track, rolling stock and signaling.

(g) to (i) Yes, Sir. In the year 2006-07, after conducting detailed Enquirer regarding late running of trains disciplinary action has taken against 2002 Railway staff for identified avoidable failures.

Agricultural distress zones

*277. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to identify agricultural distress zones in each State by the Central Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) There is no proposal to identify agricultural distress zones in each State by the Central Government. However, 31 suicide prone districts were identified in four States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. The Government of India has approved a Rehabilitation Packge amounting to Rs.16978.69 crore, for these districts in September, 2006, consisting of short term and long term measures. The Package is being implemented over a period of three years. It aims at establishing a sustainable and viable farming and livelihod support system through debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit, crop centric approach to agriculture, assured irrigation facilities, watershed management, better extension and farming support services, improved marketing facilities and subsidiary income opportunities. For alleviating the hardship faced by the debt stressed families of the deceased farmers, an *ex-gratia* assistance is being provided @ Rs 50 lakh from Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to each district covered by the Package.

Besides, to improve the condition of farmers and growth of agriculture sector in terms of production and productivity across the country, a number of measures/ initiatives have been taken by Government. These, *inter alia*, include a comprehensive credit policy for agriculture sector, reduction of interest crop loan upto Rs.3.00 takh for the farmers to 7% per annum, National Horticulture mission, National Bamboo Mission, National Rainfed Area Authority and National Water shed Development Project for Rainfed Areas. Government has also recently approved two new schemes namely (i) National Food Security Mission to increase production and productivity of rice, wheat and pulses and (ii) Additional Central Assistance Scheme to incentivise States to invest more in agriculture sector by drawing up comprehrnsive State and District Agriculture Plans for accelerating the growth of the sector.

AIDS cases in NCR

†*278. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA:
SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards burgeoning HIV positive (AIDS) cases in NCR;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.